

SPSO decision report



Case: 201807926, Heriot-Watt University
Sector: Universities
Subject: academic appeal / exam results / degree classification
Decision: Upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C, a student advisor, complained on behalf of a student (Ms A) about how Ms A's academic appeals were handled. Ms A was enrolled on a masters course at the university. Ms A was given an alternative exit award of a postgraduate diploma. Ms A submitted a Stage 1 and a Stage 2 academic appeal.

We found that the university failed to check the date that Ms A received her result before issuing their Stage 1 academic appeal response and that the university failed to consider the reason why Ms A's Stage 1 academic appeal was late. We also found that they failed to acknowledge Ms A's Stage 2 academic appeal within ten days and failed to keep Ms A updated on the progress of her Stage 2 academic appeal contrary to the university's policy. The assessor appeal response form also was not completed for Ms A's Stage 2 academic appeal. We upheld Miss C's complaints.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms A for failing to check the date that she received her result prior to issuing the Stage 1 Academic Appeal response; failing to consider the reason why Ms A's Stage 1 Academic Appeal was late; failing to acknowledge Ms A's Stage 2 Academic Appeal within ten days and for failing to keep her updated on the progress of her appeal; and failing to complete an Assessor Appeal Response Form for her Stage 2 Academic Appeal. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- The university should check the date that results have been received before responding to academic appeals.
- The reasons why an academic appeal has been submitted late should be considered.
- In accordance with the relevant policy and procedures, academic appeals should be acknowledged within the timescales and students should be kept updated on the progress of their appeals.
- In accordance with the relevant policy and procedures, the assessor appeal response form should be completed for all Stage 2 academic appeals.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.